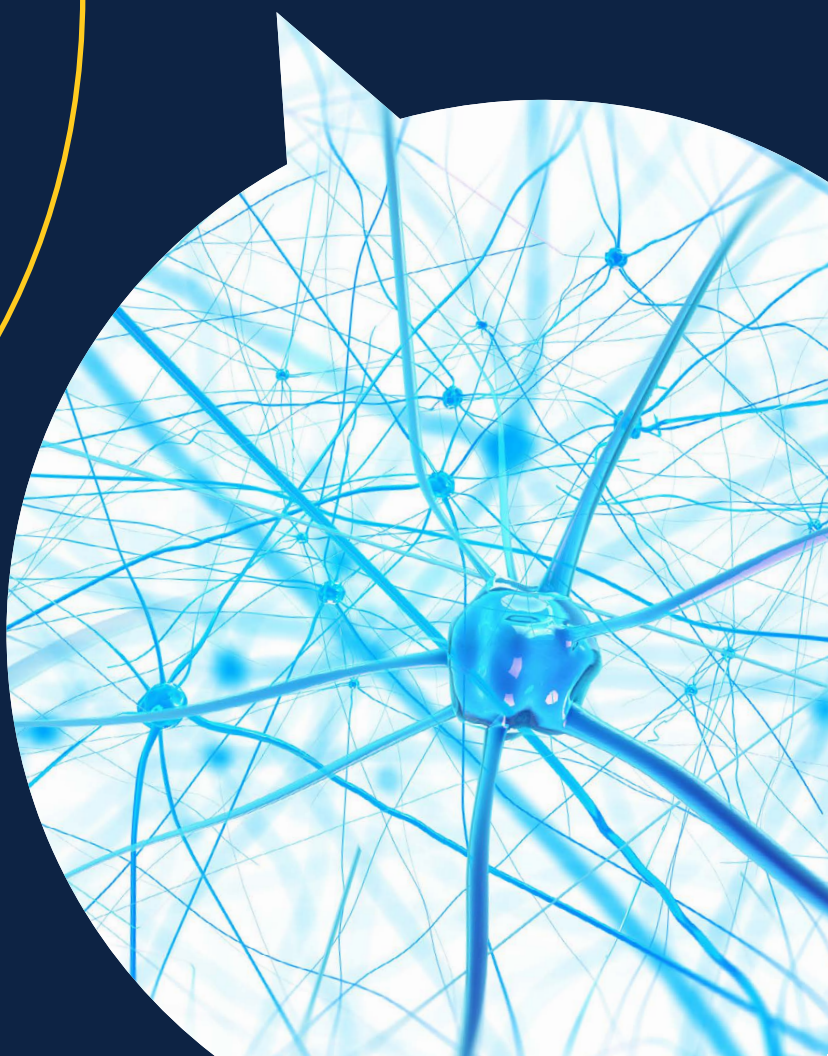


International GCSE **Psychology**

(9218) Specification



For teaching from September 2023 onwards
For exams May/June 2025 onwards
For teaching and examination outside
the United Kingdom



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Are you using the latest version of this specification?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of this specification on our website at **oxfordaqa.com/9218**
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to the specification.

Subject Content

Subject Level Guidance

Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0

1 Introduction

1.1 Why choose OxfordAQA International GCSEs?

Our international qualifications enable schools that follow a British curriculum to benefit from the best education expertise in the United Kingdom (UK).

Our International GCSEs offer the same rigour and high quality as GCSEs in the UK and are relevant and appealing to students worldwide. They reflect a deep understanding of the needs of teachers and schools around the globe and are brought to you by Oxford University Press and AQA, the UK's leading awarding body.

Providing valid and reliable assessments, these qualifications are based on over 100 years of experience, academic research and international best practice. They reflect the latest changes to the British system, enabling students to progress to higher education with up-to-date qualifications.

You can find out about OxfordAQA at oxfordaqa.com

1.2 Why choose our International GCSE Psychology?

We have worked closely with teachers to develop a relevant, engaging and up-to-date psychology specification to inspire, motivate and challenge all students regardless of their academic ability.

Particular care has been taken to make the language used in question papers as accessible as possible and suitable for those students for whom English is not their first language. UK English spellings will be used in examination papers. British idiosyncratic terms however, will be avoided to aid students' understanding.

This engaging and effective qualification introduces students to the fundamentals of psychology, developing critical analysis, independent thinking and research skills. Our assessments use multiple choice, short answer and extended writing/essays to assess knowledge, understanding, application and evaluation skills.

Knowledge of research methods gained through classroom experience of practical psychology will be assessed using scenario-based questions.

Our specification offers excellent preparation for International AS and A-level Psychology, as well as giving students a firm foundation of the knowledge and skills required for further study and future employment.

You can find out about all our International GCSE Psychology qualifications at oxfordaqa.com/9218

1.3 Recognition

OxfordAQA meet the needs of international students. They are an international alternative and comparable in standard to the Ofqual regulated qualifications offered in the UK. Our qualifications have been independently benchmarked by UK ENIC, the UK national agency for providing expert opinion on qualifications worldwide. They have confirmed they can be considered 'comparable to the overall GCE A-level and GCSE standard offered in the UK'.

To read their report and see the latest list of universities who have stated they accept these international qualifications, visit oxfordaqa.com/recognition

1.4 The Oxford International Programme learner attributes

In order to equip students with the skills they need for success both now and in the future, we have worked with Oxford University Press to create the Oxford International Programme. This combines the Oxford International Curriculum with OxfordAQA qualifications, creating an integrated offer for international schools, from Early Years to A-level.

At its core we have introduced the Oxford International Programme learner attributes – the skills and competencies that enable our students to thrive academically, socially and personally.

The learner attributes, alongside our focus on demonstrating higher order critical thinking skills, ensure that students are equipped to get the grades that will take them places, and build the skills they need to be successful when they get there.



1.5 Support and resources to help you teach

We know that support and resources are vital for your teaching and that you have limited time to find or develop good quality materials. That's why we've worked with experienced teachers to provide resources that will help you confidently plan, teach and prepare for exams.

Teaching resources

You will have access to:

- sample schemes of work to help you plan your course with confidence
- training and support to help you deliver our qualifications
- student textbooks that have been checked and approved by us
- command words with exemplars
- psychology vocabulary with definitions.

Preparing for exams

You will have access to the support you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- specimen papers and mark schemes
- exemplar student answers with examiner commentaries.

Analyse your students' results with Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

After the first examination series, you can use this tool to see which questions were the most challenging, how the results compare to previous years and where your students need to improve. ERA, our free online results analysis tool, will help you see where to focus your teaching.

Information about results, including maintaining standards over time, grade boundaries and our post-results services, will be available on our website in preparation for the first examination series.

Help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at oxfordaqa.com/9218

You can contact the subject team directly at info@oxfordaqa.com or call us on +44 (0)161 696 5995 (option 1 and then 1 again).

Please note: We aim to respond to all email enquiries within two working days.

Our UK office hours are Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm.

2 Specification at a glance

The title of the qualification is:

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Psychology.

This qualification is linear. Linear means that students will sit all their exams at the end of the course.

The guided learning hours (GLH) for this qualification are 120–140. This figure is for guidance only and may vary according to local practice and the learner's prior experience of the subject.

2.1 Subject content

Paper 1: Cognition and behaviour

- 1 Memory (page 10)
- 2 Perception (page 11)
- 3 Biopsychology (page 11)
- 4 Research methods (page 11)

Paper 2: Social context and behaviour

- 5 Communication (page 13)
- 6 Social influences (page 14)
- 7 Mental health (page 14)
- 8 Research methods (page 14)

The subject content of the Research methods topics as seen in both Paper 1 as topic 4 and Paper 2 as topic 8 is the same material. Students will be provided with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of Research methods and handling data on both Paper 1 and Paper 2.

2.2 Assessments

Paper 1: Cognition and behaviour	+	Paper 2: Social context and behaviour
What's assessed Memory Perception Biopsychology Research methods		What's assessed Communication Social influences Mental health Research methods
How it's assessed Written exam: 2 hours 100 marks 50% of GCSE		How it's assessed Written examination: 2 hours 100 marks 50% of GCSE
Questions Section A: Memory – 25 marks Section B: Perception – 25 marks Section C: Biopsychology – 25 marks Section D: Research methods – 25 marks Multiple choice, structured, short answer and extended writing responses		Questions Section A: Communication – 25 marks Section B: Social Influences – 25 marks Section C: Mental health – 25 marks Section D: Research methods – 25 marks Multiple choice, structured, short answer and extended writing responses

3 Subject content

3.1 Cognition and behaviour

In exploring key aspects of memory, perception, biopsychology and research methods students will be expected to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of psychological concepts, theories, research studies, research methods and ethical issues in relation the specified Paper 1 content
- apply psychological knowledge and understanding of the specified Paper 1 content in a range of contexts
- analyse, interpret and evaluate psychological concepts, theories, research studies and research methods in relation to the specified Paper 1 content
- show how psychological knowledge and ideas change over time and how these inform our understanding of behaviour
- demonstrate the contribution of psychology to an understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity
- demonstrate knowledge, understanding and the application of research methods, practical research skills and mathematical skills. They should be able to demonstrate they can make judgements, draw conclusions and produce developments or refinements of psychological procedures based on their reasoning and synthesis of skills.

(These research skills will be assessed in Paper 1. These skills should be developed through study of the specification content and through ethical practical research activities, involving designing research, conducting research and analysis and interpretation of data.)

3.1.1 Memory

The processes of memory: encoding, storage and retrieval.

Different types of memory: episodic memory, semantic memory and procedural memory.

Models of memory: the multi-store model of memory: sensory register, short-term memory and long-term memory. Features of each memory store: coding capacity and duration.

The primacy effect and the recency effect in recall: the effects of serial position as investigated by Murdock.

The working memory model: central executive, phonological loop, visuo-spatial sketchpad and episodic buffer. Features of each component: coding and capacity.

Dual processing tasks as investigated by Baddeley and Hitch.

The theory of reconstructive memory, including the concept of 'effort after meaning'. Bartlett's War of the Ghosts study.

Factors affecting the accuracy of memory: interference, context and false memories.

3.1.2 Perception

The difference between sensation and perception.

Visual cues and constancies: monocular depth cues: height in plane, relative size, occlusion and linear perspective and binocular depth cues: retinal disparity, convergence.

Gibson's direct theory of perception: the real world presents sufficient information for direct perception without inference. The role of motion parallax in everyday perception.

Explanations for visual illusions: ambiguity, misinterpreted depth cues, fiction, size constancy. Examples of visual illusions: the Ponzo, the Müller-Lyer, Rubin's vase, the Ames Room, the Kanizsa triangle and the Necker cube.

Gregory's constructivist theory of perception: perception uses inferences from visual cues and past experience to construct a model of reality.

Factors affecting perception: perceptual set and the effects of culture, motivation, emotion and expectation.

Studies of factors affecting perception: the investigations of Nisbett and Miyamoto, Gilchrist and Nesberg, Kunst-Wilson and Zajonc and Bruner and Minturn.

3.1.3 Biopsychology

The divisions of the human nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic), basic functions of these divisions.

The role of the endocrine system: the function of glands and hormones. The autonomic nervous system and the fight or flight response. The James-Lange theory of emotion.

The structure and function of sensory, relay and motor neurons. Synaptic transmission: release and reuptake of neurotransmitters. Excitation and inhibition. An understanding of how these processes interact.

Hebb's theory of learning and neuronal growth.

Brain structure: frontal lobe, temporal lobe, parietal lobe, occipital lobe and cerebellum.

Basic function of these structures. Localisation of function in the brain: motor, somatosensory, visual, auditory and language areas: Broca's area and Wernicke's area.

Penfield's study of the interpretive cortex.

Cognitive neuroscience: how the structure and function of the brain relate to behaviour and cognition.

The use of scanning techniques to identify brain functioning: CT, PET and fMRI scans Tulving's 'gold' memory study.

A basic understanding of how neurological damage, eg stroke or injury can affect motor abilities and behaviour.

3.1.4 Research Methods

Null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis.

Types of variables: independent variable, dependent variable, extraneous variables.

Sampling: target populations, samples and sampling methods and how to select samples using these methods:

- random
- opportunity
- systematic

- stratified.

Strengths and weaknesses of each sampling method.

Designing research: methods that produce quantitative and/or qualitative data:

- the experimental method (experimental designs, independent groups, repeated measures, matched pairs, including strengths and weaknesses of each experimental design)
- laboratory experiments
- field and natural experiments
- interviews
- questionnaires
- case studies
- observation studies (including categories of behaviour and interobserver reliability).

Strengths and weaknesses of each research method and types of research for which they are suitable.

Correlation: an understanding of association between two variables and the use of scatter diagrams to show possible correlational relationships.

The strengths and weaknesses of correlations. (Computation of formulae is not required.)

The use of standardised procedures, instructions to participants, randomisation, random allocation to conditions, counterbalancing and extraneous variables (including explaining the effect of extraneous variables and how to control for them).

How research should be planned, taking into consideration the reliability and/or validity of:

- sampling methods
- experimental designs
- quantitative and qualitative data.

Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- ethical issues in psychological research as outlined in the British Psychological Society guidelines
- ways of dealing with each of these issues.

3.1.4.1 Data handling

The difference between quantitative and qualitative data.

The difference between primary and secondary data.

Recognise and use expressions in decimal form: use ratios, fractions and percentages, estimate results, find arithmetic means and use an appropriate number of significant figures.

Understand and calculate mean, median, mode and range.

Construct and interpret frequency tables and diagrams, bar charts, histograms and scatter diagrams for correlation.

The characteristics of normal distribution.

3.2 Social context and behaviour

In exploring key aspects of communication, social influences, mental health and research methods students will be expected to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of psychological concepts, theories, research studies, research methods and ethical issues in relation the specified Paper 2 content
- apply psychological knowledge and understanding of the specified Paper 2 content in a range of contexts
- evaluate relevant therapies and treatments in relation to the specified Paper 2 content
- analyse, interpret and evaluate psychological concepts, theories, research studies and research methods in relation to the specified Paper content
- show how psychological knowledge and ideas change over time and how these inform our understanding of behaviour
- demonstrate the contribution of psychology to an understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity
- demonstrate knowledge, understanding and the application of research methods, practical research skills and mathematical skills. They should be able to demonstrate they can make judgements, draw conclusions and produce developments or refinements of psychological procedures based on their reasoning and synthesis of skills.

(These research skills will be assessed in Paper 2. These skills should be developed through study of the specification content and through ethical practical research activities, involving designing research, conducting research and analysis and interpretation of data.)

3.2.1 Communication

The possible relationship between language and thought. Piaget's theory: language depends on thought and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: thinking depends on language.

Variation in recall of events and recognition of colours, eg in Native American cultures.

Differences between human and animal communication. The limited functions of animal communication (survival, reproduction, territory, food).

Von Frisch's bee study.

Properties of human communication not present in animal communication, eg plan ahead and discuss future events.

Definitions of non-verbal communication and verbal communication. Functions of eye contact including regulating flow of conversation, signalling attraction and expressing emotion.

Body language: open and closed posture, postural echo and touch.

Personal space: cultural, status and gender differences.

Darwin's evolutionary theory of non-verbal communication as evolved and adaptive. Evidence that non-verbal behaviour is innate, eg in neonates and the sensory deprived. Evidence that non-verbal behaviour is learned. Yuki's study of emoticons.

3.2.2 Social influence

Identification and explanation of how social factors (group size, anonymity and task difficulty) and dispositional factors (personality, expertise) affect conformity to majority influence. Conformity as investigated by Asch

Obedience as investigated by Milgram. Milgram's Agency theory of social factors affecting obedience: agency, authority, culture and proximity.

Explanation of dispositional factors affecting obedience. Adorno's theory of the Authoritarian Personality.

Identification and explanation of how social factors (presence of others and the cost of helping) and dispositional factors (similarity to victim and expertise) affect bystander intervention. Studies of bystander behaviour: Piliavin's subway study., Latane and Darley's smoke study and Levine's football supporter study.

Prosocial and antisocial behaviour in crowds: identification and explanation of how social factors (social loafing, deindividuation and culture) and dispositional factors (personality and morality) affect collective behaviour.

3.2.3 Mental health

How the incidence of significant mental health problems changes over time

Characteristics of mental health, eg positive engagement with society, effective coping with challenges.

Cultural variations in beliefs about mental health problems.

Increased challenges of modern living, eg isolation.

Increased recognition of the nature of mental health problems and lessening of social stigma.

Effects of significant mental health problems on individuals and society. Individual effects, eg damage to relationships, difficulties coping with day to day life, negative impact on physical wellbeing.

Social effects, eg need for more social care, increased crime rates, implications for the economy.

The use of International Classification of Diseases in diagnosing obsessive-compulsive disorder: characteristics of obsessions and compulsions and diagnostic criteria.

Explanations of obsessive-compulsive disorder: biological factors and the cognitive explanations.

Therapy for obsessive-compulsive disorder: cognitive behaviour therapy.

Kearns's study of the effectiveness of cognitive behaviour therapy for obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The use of International Classification of Diseases in diagnosing post traumatic stress disorder: characteristics of post traumatic stress disorder and diagnostic criteria.

Explanations of post traumatic stress disorder: biological factors and dual representation theory.

Therapy for post traumatic stress disorder: prolonged exposure therapy

Eftekhari's study of the effectiveness of prolonged exposure therapy for post traumatic stress disorder.

3.2.4 Research methods

The content for this topic is the same material as presented in 3.1.4 Research methods above, also including 3.1.4.1 Data handling

4 Scheme of assessment

Find mark schemes, and specimen papers for new courses, on our website at oxfordaqa.com/psychology

This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

Our International GCSE exams and certification for this specification are available for the first time in May/June 2025 and then every May/June and November for the life of the specification.

All materials are available in English only.

Our GCSE exams in Psychology include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- draw together their knowledge, skills and understanding from across the full course of study
- provide extended responses.

4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

Courses based on this specification must encourage students to:

- use specialist vocabulary, psychological concepts, terminology and convention to engage in the process of psychological enquiry
- acquire knowledge and understanding of psychology, developing an understanding of self and others, and how psychological understanding can help to explain everyday social phenomena
- understand how psychological research is conducted, including the role of scientific method and data analysis
- present information, develop arguments and draw conclusions through a critical approach to psychological evidence, developing as reflective thinkers
- develop an understanding of the relationship between psychology and personal, moral, social and cultural issues, and develop an understanding of ethical issues in psychology
- develop an understanding of psychological issues, the contribution of psychology to individual, social and cultural diversity, and how psychology contributes to society.

4.2 Assessment Objectives

The exams will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes and procedures.
- AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes and procedures.
- AO3: Analyse and evaluate psychological information, ideas, processes and procedures to make judgements and draw conclusions.

4.2.1 Assessment Objective weightings

Assessment Objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (%)		Overall weighting of AOs (approx. %)
	Paper 1	Paper 2	
AO1	17.5	17.5	35
AO2	17.5	17.5	35
AO3	15	15	30
Overall weighting of components (%)	50	50	100

4.3 Assessment weightings

Component	Maximum raw mark	Scaling factor	Maximum scaled mark
Paper 1	100	x1	100
Paper 2	100	x1	100
Total scaled mark:			200

5 General administration

We are committed to delivering assessments of the highest quality and have developed practices and procedures that support this aim. To ensure that all students have a fair experience, we have worked with other awarding bodies in England to develop best practice for maintaining the integrity of exams. This is published through the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). We will maintain the same high standard through their use for OxfordAQA.

More information on all aspects of administration is available at oxfordaqa.com/exams-admin

For any immediate enquiries please contact info@oxfordaqa.com

Please note: We aim to respond to all email enquiries within two working days.

Our UK office hours are Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm local time.

5.1 Entries and codes

You only need to make one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers and certification.

Qualification title	OxfordAQA entry code
OxfordAQA International GCSE Psychology	9218

Please check the current version of the Entry Codes book and the latest information about making entries on oxfordaqa.com/exams-admin

Exams will be available May/June and in November.

5.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

This specification overlaps with the AQA UK GCSE in Psychology (8182).

5.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

In line with UK GCSEs, this qualification will be graded on a nine-point scale: 1 to 9 – where 9 is the best grade. Students who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade 1 will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

To find out more about the new grading system, visit our website at oxfordaqa.com

5.4 Resits

Candidates can retake the whole qualification as many times as they wish. This is a traditional linear specification, individual components cannot be resat.

You only need to make one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers and certification.

5.5 Previous learning and prerequisites

There are no previous learning requirements. Any requirements for entry to a course based on this specification are at the discretion of schools.

5.6 Access to assessment: equality and inclusion

Our general qualifications are designed to prepare students for a wide range of occupations and further study whilst assessing a wide range of competences.

The subject criteria have been assessed to ensure they test specific competences. The skills or knowledge required do not disadvantage particular groups of students.

Exam access arrangements are available for students with disabilities and special educational needs.

We comply with the *UK Equality Act 2010* to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled student. Information about access arrangements will be issued to schools when they become OxfordAQA centres.

5.7 Safeguarding

Some of the content within this curriculum may generate discussions or disclosures from students which raise safeguarding concerns. If this happens, please follow your centre's safeguarding policy to arrange support.

5.8 Working with OxfordAQA for the first time

You will need to apply to become an OxfordAQA centre to offer our specifications to your students. Find out how at oxfordaqa.com/centreapprovals

5.9 Private candidates

Centres may accept private candidates for examined units/components only with the prior agreement of OxfordAQA. If you are an approved OxfordAQA centre and wish to accept private candidates, please contact OxfordAQA at: info@oxfordaqa.com

Private candidates may also enter for examined only units/components via the British Council; please contact your local British Council office for details.

Fairness *first*

Thank you for choosing OxfordAQA,
the international exam board that puts
fairness first.

Benchmarked to UK standards, our
exams only ever test subject ability, not
language skills or cultural knowledge.

This gives every student the best
possible chance to show what they can
do and get the results they deserve.



Get in touch

You can contact us at
oxfordaqa.com/contact-us

or email *info@oxfordaqa.com*